

Casa Tierra
15231 Quito Road
Saratoga
Santa Clara County
California

HABS No. CA-2113

HABS,
CAL,
43-SARA,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CASA TIERRA

HABS No. CA-2113

Location: 15231 Quito Road
Saratoga, Santa Clara County, California

USGS Los Gatos Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 10.589000.4122510

Present Owner: Dr. and Mrs. Maurice Tripp, 15231 Quito Road
Saratoga, CA 95070

Present Occupant: Dr. and Mrs. Tripp

Present Use: Residence and Office

Significance: This adobe structure was built in 1941 by Maude Meagher and Carolyn Smiley as the publishing house residence for World Youth, an international children's magazine. The two women, with the help of a few others, made the adobe by hand from the clay on site, and the roof tile is the last of the handmade tile used in replacement of tile on the California missions. It is reported to be the largest secular adobe in North America, containing some 13,000 square feet of floor space.

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This large structure is a good example of latter day use of a very old building material, adobe brick, that adapts itself so well to the natural site.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This one floor, multi-level structure has a U-shaped basic plan around a courtyard with wings extending out in two directions.
2. Foundation: Concrete
3. Walls: Adobe brick left natural. Adobe buttresses on some walls.
4. Structural system: Load-bearing adobe exterior walls with large timber structure. Some concrete is used for lintels.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: There is a covered porch at the west ell of the house in the courtyard, with an entrance into the bedroom corridor. There is a shed roof, tile floor, exposed wooden structure ceiling and a very low tile base around the two open sides. There is a set of curving tile steps leading up to the porch from one of the terraces in the courtyard.

The courtyard, entered at the east corner of the U, is a series of stepped terraces, with steps and walks leading from each of the wings. The courtyard is very densely landscaped with a large variety of plants. There is a terrace on the south side of the kitchen at the rear entrance. It has a tile floor and has exposed wooden beams covering it in the form of a trellis.

6. Chimneys: There are four chimneys through the roof, serving six fireplaces. The concrete chimneys are faced on the outside with various sizes and shapes of clay tile. The chimney from the living room fireplace is plastered and has a flat chimney hood. The other chimneys have gabled hoods covered with clay tile.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is near the center of the west side of the U and opens from the courtyard into an entrance hall. The wooden door is vertical boards with large wrought iron strap hinges, and has wooden surrounds and a wooden framed screen door. Other exterior doors are exactly the same, these being in the kitchen, hallway, and one study. There is a pair of large wooden doors, similar, in the printing room, for service and delivery.
- b. Windows and shutters: In each room there are multi-panel openings with steel reinforced adobe mullions that have rows of eight and ten across and two, three or four rows high fixed plate glass. The sloping sills are adobe. Above the lintels of some of these windows are openings with copper screen wire with hinged wooden panels. Other windows are wooden framed casement sashes, some with diamond-pattern lights and others have four lights in each sash. Inside sills are tile.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is covered with red clay mission tile. There is an addition to the south with a gable roof covered with wooden-shake shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Open eaves with exposed beams in the wide overhang.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The floor plan is one room wide as it continues around the U-shape. The entrance near the center of the west wing opens into an entrance hall. Down two steps from the entrance is the dining room. The dining room has windows on both the east and west walls. A doorway on the south, in the east corner, leads into the tea room. This small room has windows on the east and west and a large opening on the south, with a very large square wooden column in the center of the opening, leading into the kitchen. There are low divider walls, also acting as buttresses on each side of the opening. The large kitchen has windows on the south and west walls, an exterior doorway on the south, center of wall, and a large fireplace in the center of the east wall. There is an opening on the left side of the fireplace leading into a large storage room. The storage room leads into the former garage which is now a shop. An addition has been made on the south end of the garage which is also a workshop. From the entrance hall up three steps, is the living room. The dining room, entrance hall and living room all open together separated only by the floor level changes and small buttresses at each side of the steps. There is a large window on the east and west walls of the living room, and on the north wall is a large fireplace. A doorway to the right of the fireplace and up one step leads into a narrow hallway. The hallway makes a right turn, forming an ell and extending along the north wing, on the courtyard side, ending at a bedroom on the east. To the left of the hallway are a bedroom, study and bathroom. The study has a fireplace that backs up to the living room fireplace. In the hallway are three steps leading back down to a lower hallway. There is an entrance on the east and south walls of the hallway to the courtyard. A small hallway leads off to the north that has an exterior entrance into the yard. In the center of the north wing are two bedrooms with a connecting bath located in a projection to the north. Between the two bedrooms are back-to-back fireplaces. At the end of the hallway is a large bedroom with a large window on the east and a small window on the north.

On the south is a large opening leading down a flight of eight steps into a study. The study has large windows on the east and a fireplace on the south wall. A door to the right of the fireplace leads into a small hallway with a bath, and on into a large library. The library has an opening on the east wall leading into the workroom. From there the house makes an ell to the south, which houses the printing room. The library, workroom and printing room are now used as a laboratory and office. The courtyard enclosed by the house has several levels of terraces with steps and landscaped garden. There is an irregular pattern to the shape of the gardens and terraces. All the floor surfaces and the steps have tile covering. Some of the risers have glazed decorative tiles.

2. Stairways: There are no major stairways, only series of steps. The concrete steps, varying in widths have tile flooring and glazed decorative tile risers.

3. Flooring: Glazed and unglazed, decorative and plain clay tile, some laid in patterns, others randomly laid.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are adobe brick painted with white cement paint. Ceilings in the living room, dining room, library, kitchen and print room have exposed redwood beams and wooden planking. Ceilings in the bedrooms and bathrooms are furred down with fibre board, redwood battens and painted. Ceilings in some bedrooms are papered with tea chest paper. There is a zinc plate frieze in the study off the bedroom in the west corner of the house.
5. Doorways and doors: Wooden doors have five horizontal recessed panels and wooden surrounds.
6. Special decorative features, trim and cabinetwork: the fireplace in the kitchen has a stepped, projecting chimney piece. The faces of each step are covered with glazed tiles. There is a decorative tile lintel facing across the firebox opening, and there is no hearth.

The fireplace in the living room extends almost across the north side and has a stepped chimney piece. The plastered face of each step is edged with green tile. The firebox has a tile facing around the opening.

There is a low mantel shelf that extends across the room. The facing on the lower part of the mantel piece is faced with a mosaic pattern of copper printing plate from the printing room. The plates are photographs of many young people from forty-nine countries around the world. The two fireplaces in the guest rooms have stepped chimney pieces, plastered and painted and edged in green tile.

The stepped chimney pieces in the studies are faced with photo-engraving plates, one in zinc and one in copper. The one with zinc is edged with blue tile and the tile and the copper one, in green.

7. Mechanical:
 1. Heating: Gas-fired space heaters
 2. Plumbing: Modern plumbing fixtures
 3. Electrical: Modern lighting fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house sits back from the road on the west side. A brick driveway encircles a landscaped island. The driveway, with its two entrances from the road ends in a parking area on the south side, near the workshop. From the driveway there is a wooden archway leading into the enclosed courtyard. There is an adobe wall surrounding the two-and-one-half acre site on all sides. The wall encloses many landscaped gardens. Near the northwest corner of the site

is a terrace that is partially covered with exposed wooden beams, surrounded by landscaping. There are similar large landscaped residential properties on both sides, across the street and behind. The rolling hillside is left virtually in its natural contour.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
August 1980

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service's National Architectural and Engineering Record in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara, California. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS and Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect, the project was completed during the summer of 1980 at the HABS Field Office, Santa Clara, California by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Associate Professor of Architecture Texas Tech. University); David T. Marsh, Jr., Project Foreman (Howard University); Jeffery Flemming, Project Historian (University of Chicago); Jane Lidz, Architect/Photographer; and student Architects Kimberley E. Harden (Auburn University); Melody S. Linger (University of Florida); and Mathew Poe (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).

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